



The Aging Workforce

It is universally recognized that older drivers are praised for their work ethic, reliability, maturity, knowledge, and experience. However, as we age, our bodies and mind begin to change. Recognizing that change and being prepared for it is often a challenge. Many of our most extensive injuries during 2023 came from drivers who were advancing in age above 65 years old. The ATA Comp Fund/Alliance Interstate Risk claim analytics show that the frequency of accidents/injuries for the older age group is the same as other age groups, but the severity of the claims is up to 50% higher.

Other industry statistics:

- Our bodies start to show signs of aging around ages 40-50.
- 53% of the driver workforce in our industry is over the age of 55. That breaks out as 39% between the ages of 55-64 and 14% over 65 years old (ATRI Driver Workforce study).
- Workers in the 55-64 age group have a 20.7% fatal fall rate and those over 65 had a fatal fall rate of 27.3% rate compared to an 8% fatal fall rate for workers in the 20-29 age group.

It's no secret that, as we age, our bodies react to injury differently and the time it takes to heal can be longer. Not only that, but our bodies change, and we must adapt to those changes to reduce the risk of injury. What can we do to keep our older workforce safe?

Acknowledge limitations as our bodies change. This can be physical or mental and impact vision, hearing, strength, flexibility, cognitive skills, and stamina. Practicing safe work methods and using safety devices can make a positive impact. Some examples include using a 5th wheel pin puller, ergonomic cheater bar, proper lifting techniques, stretching, and portable steps/stairs and straps to assist with loading and unloading. Also consider PPE such as night driving (yellow) lens eyewear that reduces glare and improves depth perception.

Emphasize wellness and proper rest. Individual health also affects performance, and this can be more important as we age. Highlight good habits like healthy eating, physical fitness, and getting sufficient rest. This can be accomplished through providing content and coaching on dietary habits and options. Companies can also promote exercise ideas and options while drivers are out on the road. Lastly, drivers must be reminded to obtain proper rest in order to function at high levels.

Building and sustaining relationships with drivers. Meaningful communication leads to trust between drivers, driver managers, and the safety department. By building respect and trust, concerns (physical, mental, safety, technology....) are often then discussed, and strategies developed to assist with providing additional training, accommodations, and ways to complete the job in a safe and efficient manner.



Leverage experience in a mentorship program. The adage “the best way to learn is to teach” is true. When a driver becomes a mentor, they are empowered and motivated to perform their best. Make sure mentors understand the importance of passing on their knowledge and expertise to less experienced colleagues while making safety a big part of the program. This is a great way to fight complacency in older/experienced drivers. ATA Comp Fund/AIR Risk Managers can provide information on establishing a mentorship program.

The ATA Comp Fund /AIR have several videos that can be used to assist with Safe Work Methods:

- 5th Wheel Pin Puller: <https://bit.ly/47wwW8X>
- Cheater bar/ergonomic cheater bar: <https://bit.ly/3JgZ8D8>
- Safe Lifting: Power Zone: <https://bit.ly/3vbvSKB>
- Proper technique entering and exiting the cab: <https://bit.ly/4aRym0F>
- Truck Driver Stretches:
 - Best Stretch for Truck Drivers: <https://bit.ly/3ZIPYqm>
 - Stretches inside the cab: <https://bit.ly/46HcAdp>
 - Stretches outside the cab: <https://bit.ly/3tk9cGS>